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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000612

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/16/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [KDEM](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: TFH01: WORST CASE SCENARIO FOR WEEKEND VIOLENCE

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Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4(d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: While civil action has so far remained peaceful save for the death of one protester on July 5, there has been a palpable increase in tension leading into the scheduled July 18 round of negotiations between President Zelaya and de facto regime head Micheletti. The prospects for violence as we approach the weekend are certainly on the minds of many Hondurans, and scenarios of violence abound in both the public rhetoric and the rumor mill. The Embassy has closely monitored reports and rumors as we hear them, though many remain uncorroborated. End summary.

¶2. (S) President Zelaya has made several public statements citing Article 3 of the Constitution asserting the right of the Honduran people to use insurgency to combat the Micheletti regime. (Note: While Article 3 has been cited by Zelaya supporters from the start of the crisis, Zelaya himself had refrained from such rhetoric until this week End note.). We have information that preparations have been made by pro-Zelaya forces to carry out the violent acts implied by Zelaya's statements.

¶3. (S) As of July 6, we had a report that Venezuelan President Chavez had arranged for food, weapons (pistols and rifles) and other supplies to be brought into Honduras from Nicaragua for the use of Zelaya supporters. On July 13, there was a report that up to 30 Salvadoran leftist activists had entered Honduras with powder for use in improvised explosive devices.

¶4. (S) Information we have obtained from sources very close to Zelaya indicate that though Chavez is agitating for insurgency sooner rather than later, Zelaya intends to hold off on calling for such action until he perceives that the Arias talks are not progressing, or that the Micheletti side is not negotiating in good faith. Our best guess, therefore, is that no escalation of violence will occur until Sunday, July 19 at the earliest, though other reporting indicates that as early as Friday, July 17, the Bloque Popular intends to take violent action hoping to provoke the Honduran military and/or police into an even more violent response.

¶5. (S) At the least, we expect that Zelaya would make a public announcement that the Arias talks had failed, giving us fair warning that violent actions might occur. Another scenario would be that if the radical left perceives talks are progressing, they would seek to provoke violence in an effort to torpedo a resolution they deemed undesirable.

¶6. (S) In either case if things go wrong and violence erupts, we expect it might take the form of explosives planted at government offices, fast food restaurants or near private homes of high-profile regime supporters.

(Note: there have been isolated cases of grenades and small improvised explosives placed in garbage cans and thrown into buildings over the course of the crisis, but with no injury so far. End note.) Individual agitators mixed in with large protests would have little problem inciting conflict with a few well-timed and well-placed shots. We have information that the Honduran military is running low on non-lethal crowd control measures (like tear gas), which may increase the possibility of violent confrontation.

¶7. (SBU) Pro-Micheletti daily "El Herald" published an article July 16 titled "Plan Caracas" detailing one such scenario. According to the article, the destabilization effort would begin by staging a protest at a guarded public building. Gang members paid between 300 and 500 Lempiras (approximately USD15 to 25) would be placed at the front of the crowd and would violently engage the military in an effort to provoke return fire. Then, "irregular groups" infiltrated into the crowd would then open fire to ensure a massacre. The massacre would be blamed on military forces controlled by the de facto Micheletti regime and provoke anarchy in the country.

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¶8. (SBU) The final piece of the plan according to "El Herald" is for Zelaya to enter the country via its southern border with Nicaragua under the protection of local drug traffickers and "armed cells" that had infiltrated into Honduras. While "Plan Caracas" sounds fantastical and has not been confirmed by other Embassy sources, it is emblematic of the rumors circulating Tegucigalpa that Zelaya is planning to return to retake the presidency violently, and with Venezuelan support.

¶9. (S) Another version of the Zelaya return scenario has him returning overland from Nicaragua amidst a crowd of civilians, thereby presenting the Honduran Armed Forces with an impossible decision between using force against civilians or letting Zelaya enter. Several Embassy contacts believe such a return could happen as early as Saturday, but are more likely to take place after the 30th anniversary celebrations of the FSLN revolution in Nicaragua, scheduled for July 18-19.

¶10. (C) Post received reports from numerous sources on July 16 that President Zelaya had already entered Honduras and was in his home department of Olancho awaiting an opportunity to move on the capital. The rumors claimed the Honduran Armed Forces (HOAF) were "militarizing the area in an effort to prevent Zelaya's return." Post's HOAF sources stated the rumors were incorrect and there was no military buildup in that area.

¶11. (S) Comment: The ubiquity of rumors of violence and rumors of Zelaya's return, ready for a fight, has Honduran society on edge. We will continue to closely monitor any/all indications that pro-Zelaya and international forces may be planning for fight. End Comment.

LLORENS